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Mass Anti-slavery Society



S P E E C H

OF

REV. HENRY (BLEBY),

MISSIONARY FROM BARBADOES,

ON THE

RESULTS OF EMANCIPATION

IN THE

BRITISH W. I. COLONIES,

Delivered at the Celebration of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, held at Island Grove, Abington, July 31st, 1858.

PHONOGRAPHIC REPORT BY J. M. W. YERRINGTON.

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MASS. ANTI-SLAVERY SOC

S P E E C H .

I am happy, Mr. President, that you have placed me before this assembly, not as one from whom a speech may be expected, but in the capacity of a witness; and therefore I can tell a plain, straight-forward tale, without being at all cast down by the consciousness that I cannot make any pretension to those gifts of oratory, which I have observed our friends have been accustomed to meet with in connection with those who have taken a leading part on such occasions as this.

I am, perhaps, Mr. Chairman, the only person present who was an eye-witness of that event which you have met together this day to celebrate. You will see that I am not a very old man, sir; the snows of age have not entirely covered my head; but I am old enough to have been present during that insurrection to which you have referred, and which was one of the principal events which hastened on the crisis of the movement for West India Emancipation, and constrained the British government to 'let the oppressed go free.' (It had been customary with the pro-slavery press of Great Britain,—and a very large portion of that press was, up to a late hour, under the influence of the West India body, and of those interested in

the maintenance of slavery,—it had been customary for that press, as it is now of the pro-slavery press of this country, to endeavor to mislead the masses by asserting that the slaves were better off than they would be in freedom, that they were perfectly content with their lot, that they hugged their chains, and that it was, in brief, a condition very little short of the happiness of Paradise. You may imagine, then, what sort of feeling would be excited in Great Britain, among its churches and the people generally, when the startling intelligence reached them, in the beginning of 1832, that fifty thousand slaves in the island of Jamaica had made an effort for liberty, had resolved to strike a blow for freedom, and had stood up in opposition to their masters, and to the law which held them in bondage, and claimed their freedom. Sir, the illusion was at once dispelled, and it was seen and felt, throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, that the public mind had been imposed upon, and that there existed in the West Indies, amongst the slaves, an intense desire, nay, more than that, a *determination* to be free. Sir, I happened to be stationed in the island of Jamaica, and in that part of it which was the scene of this insurrection. I knew the person with whom the insurrection originated very well; I marked its progress; I was an eye-witness to the cruelties and slaughter by which it was suppressed; and I saw it brought to a termination. The man with whom the insurrection originated,—Samuel Sharp,—was a slave, and a member of the Baptist church in Montego Bay. Although it may seem strange to many, Sam Sharp was a very handsome negro, a perfect model man; and, more than that, he

had learned to read. He was born in slavery, but he had never felt any thing of the bitterness of slavery. He was born in a family that treated him indulgently; he was a pet, and was brought up as the playmate of the juvenile members of the family, and had opportunities of learning to read and for mental cultivation, to which very few of his fellow-slaves had access; and Sharp, above all this, was possessed of a mind worthy of any man, and of oratorical powers of no common order. I have been astonished, when I have heard that man address a large assembly, as I did several times while he was in jail, to see the power with which he swayed the feelings, the hearts, and the minds of his auditory. He was a man of no common stamp, though a black man, and born in slavery.

Well, sir, Sharp determined to free himself and his fellow-slaves. I do not know whether he was himself deceived, or whether he knowingly deceived his fellow-conspirators, but he persuaded a large number of them to believe that the British government had made them free, and that their owners were keeping them in slavery in opposition to the wishes of the authorities in England. It so happened, sir, that, just at that time, the planters themselves were pursuing a course which favored Sharp's proceedings directly. They were holding meetings through the length and breadth of the island, protesting against the interference of the home government with their property, passing very inflammatory resolutions, and threatening that they would transfer their allegiance to the United States, in order that they might perpetuate their interest in their slaves.

Sharp dexterously took advantage of these meetings, and pointed out to the slaves, that if it were not true that the British government were willing to make them free, there would be no necessity for such meetings and such publications as these. The consequence was, that about fifty thousand of these people, at the Christmas holidays, were in insurrection, and claimed their rights as British subjects, and as free men, refusing to go to work on any terms, except on the payment of their proper wages as free workmen. The insurrection was soon put down, as you may imagine. Sharp really believed that the British soldiers would not act in opposition to the slaves, in claiming their freedom; he soon found his mistake, however. A large body of military was ordered to that part of the island. The commander-in-chief was a man who felt as a man ought to feel under such circumstances, and sought to do every thing he could to put an end to the insurrection by lenient measures, and issued a proclamation, promising that all who would return to their duty within a limited period should be pardoned,—that no notice should be taken of what they had done, unless they had been guilty of incendiarism, or had committed personal violence upon the opposite party. Parties were sent out with the proclamation, and many of the slaves, finding that their attempt to recover their freedom in this way would be vain, came in, and resumed their labors upon the estates. The insurrection would soon have been put down, and very little loss of life would have ensued, had not the militia of the island, consisting of the planters, who had manifested the greatest cowardice when the insurrection broke out, now recov-

ered their bravery, and subjected those who had taken part in it to every indignity and outrage. I have seen men and women who came in under the proclamation, and the promise it contained from the commander-in-chief, taken out of the field, with their hoes in their hands, tied, and shot dead. I used to see the gallows filled with insurgents from morning to night. I remember, on one occasion, my attention was directed to an execution which was about to take place—that of one of the principal leaders in the insurrection. A court-martial was sitting in Montego Bay, and about twenty or thirty yards off, a gallows had been erected, on which five or six persons could be executed at once. Five men were hanging on it, and five more were beneath it, and it was rumored that Capt. Dehany, a man who had taken a leading part in the insurrection, was to be executed in the next lot. The executioner, who was a brutal black man, and one who had escaped the gallows on condition that he should perform these horrible duties, was leaning against one of the posts of the gallows, eating his breakfast,—a piece of salt fish in one hand, and a piece of plantain in the other. He was told his victims were ready. (They only allowed the doomed ones half an hour after their conviction to prepare for death.) Bacchus,—that was the name of the executioner,—put down his food upon a projection of the gallows, walked up the ladder, and with the knife with which he had been eating his breakfast, severed the cords on which the victims on the gallows were hanging, and down they fell, one after another, upon the heap of dead below. Then he brought out Dehany and his fellows. I knew him at once,

though I had never seen him before, by the demeanor of the man,—a fine, broad-chested, model man,—a yellow-skinned negro, as they called him there; but there rested upon his countenance an angry frown. The man walked out to meet his doom as if he were walking at the head of a triumphal procession. A gentleman stepped up to him and said, ‘Dehany, what is troubling you at a time like this?’ ‘Mr. Manderson,’ said he, ‘they want me to go before God with a lie in my mouth. They want me to say that the missionaries put us up to it. They know it is a lie.’ ‘Well, never mind,’ said the gentleman; ‘don’t let that trouble you now.’ The frown soon passed off his face, and they were marched up the platform and tied up; signal was given, and the rope was cut. I looked, and only four of them hung upon the gallows, and Dehany was not among them. The rope had broken, and he had fallen to the ground. They picked him up, half-strangled, and in a state of unconsciousness for a moment or two. I went up, in the midst of the crowd, to witness his demeanor. Still, sir, with all these horrors about him, the man was undaunted. I could hear the whisper of prayer upon his lips; there was nothing about him of bravado, but every thing that indicated the manly courage of one who is conscious he is dying in an honorable cause. (Applause.)

So it was with Samuel Sharp. After the insurrection was put down, Sharp was taken, and he was the last man put to death in consequence of that insurrection. About two thousand were slain; many of them, of course, in encounters with the military, but most of them were either shot or hanged in cold blood.

I have myself seen not less than nineteen of these poor creatures led out in one batch, to be hanged up like dogs. I have known sixty to be led out from the same jail, in the course of three days, and put to death. On one occasion, I saw a poor fellow brought into town, his hands tied behind him; a court martial was immediately summoned, and with scarcely a show of evidence that the man had done any thing in connection with the insurrection,—indeed, there was nothing found, except that he was in the midst of a crowd looking on whilst a building was burning which had been set on fire by the insurrectionists,—he was convicted, and led out to be shot. They were in such a hurry, that they did not even take the trouble to pass sentence upon him; and when within an hour and a half from the time he was brought into the town, he stood under the gallows, I heard him inquire, ‘What are you going to do with me?’ They had not even had the humanity to tell him he was going to die. The officer stepped up to him, took up his jacket, which had been torn off when he was brought to the spot, threw it over his face, and said, ‘You will find out in a moment.’ He stepped back, the word was given, and the man lay there, a bullet through his brain, and another through his heart. I heard one man say to the crowd of slaves standing round,—pointing to the hole in the slave’s head,—‘You want your freedom, do you? Put your finger there! That is the kind of freedom we will give you, you black devils!’ This I heard with my own ears.

I saw hundreds thus slaughtered in cold blood. Sharp was the last brought out to be put to death; and his end was worthy of his character.

I had frequent opportunities to converse with him while he was in jail. When I saw so many put to death, I wrote a communication for one of the island newspapers, with the intention of directing the Governor's attention to the wholesale slaughter that was going on. It had the effect I intended. The Governor read it, and the next post brought down an order to the authorities, civil and military, that no further executions should take place for crimes committed during the insurrection, without his own warrant. Thus it happened that Samuel Sharp was detained in prison several weeks after he had been tried, and sentence of death pronounced upon him, and I had frequent opportunities of conversing with him. He was a man who had read the New Testament, and read the newspapers, and was in all respects a superior man. I asked him what it was that induced him to take part in this movement, since he had never suffered, as many had, under the lash. 'Sir,' said he, 'in reading my Bible, I found the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I had to make a slave of the white man—(applause); and I would rather go out, and die on that gallows, than live a slave.' (Loud applause.) The young ladies of the family to which he belonged made him a very handsome suit of white clothes, and I saw him march to his death. I heard the remarks which he made when he stood on the platform under the gallows; and, sir, I could not but drop a tear to see a man like that put to death, whose only crime was, that he made an effort to recover that liberty which is the right of every human being, and of which he, in common with his brethren, had been wrongfully and wickedly deprived.

The insurrection was put down, and the intention which Sharp entertained in connection with it was frustrated. His design was not to do violence to any person or property, but simply to act upon the principle of passive resistance. He argued in this way:—‘They will put to death some of us, if we sit down and refuse to work after Christmas, and we must be content to die for the benefit of the rest. I, for one, am ready to die, in order that the rest may be free. (Applause.) They may put some of us to death, but they cannot hang and shoot us all, and if we are faithful one to another, we must obtain our freedom.’ (Renewed applause.)

Samuel Sharp’s plan was defeated, in this way:—He had not calculated sufficiently upon the impulsive character of the men he undertook to lead in this movement,—upon their not being accustomed to exercise self-restraint; consequently, when some of them broke into the store-houses of the estates, and became intoxicated, and then set fire to the buildings, that was regarded as a signal all over the country, and the works and mills were destroyed on two hundred or three hundred estates. Sharp said, ‘When this occurred, I saw the scheme was defeated. I knew that the whites would slaughter us without mercy, and our freedom be a long while put off.’

But, sir, although the immediate design of Sharp was not accomplished, yet it was ultimately. This very insurrection was one of the events which hastened the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. I dare say my friend Mr. Garrison is sufficiently acquainted with the history of those times to remember that in the Committee appointed by the House of

Lords to investigate the whole question of slavery, and also that in the Committee appointed by the House of Commons, the decision on the question of the immediate abolition of slavery turned upon this point,—‘Will it be safe to the planters that slavery be continued?’ Two of my brother missionaries, who went home for the express purpose of appearing before these Committees, gave it as their opinion that it would not be safe; that these insurrectionary attempts would be repeated, and that the probability was, that if the British government did not bring slavery in the colonies to a peaceful termination, it would soon be quenched in blood, and the slaves would emancipate themselves. That conviction was forced upon the Committees of both Houses of Parliament; they reported accordingly, and the doom of slavery was sealed.

Sir, it was my privilege to be in Jamaica when slavery came to an end, and I rejoiced the more to be a witness of its extinction, because I had suffered in common with my brethren, in connection with it. We were sent out as the instructors of the slaves and free colored people. We built churches, assisted by the liberality of the British people, all over the island, wherever we could, and we were sustained by funds contributed by British benevolence, as instructors of the negroes. Well, sir, we were denounced by the planters, from the beginning of our efforts, as spies of the Anti-Slavery Society. They had sagacity enough to discover, at a very early period of our labors, that slavery and Christianity could not long co-exist; that they were essentially antagonistic, and that the one must ultimately destroy the other. De-

terminated to perpetuate slavery, they resolved to do all they could to get rid of Christianity, and keep their people in heathen darkness; and, consequently, throughout our history we were subjected to the most bitter persecution; and, sir, just after the insurrection to which I have referred, the whole white people of the island of Jamaica banded themselves together in an association which they called 'The Colonial Union,' the avowed object of which was to drive every instructor of the negroes from the island. Eighteen of our churches were levelled with the ground. They dragged the missionaries to prison, got false witnesses to swear against them, treated them with brutal violence, and did every thing they could to put an end to our labors. But, as they were determined to drive us away, we were determined to remain, and remain we did. (Loud applause.) Though our churches lay in ruins, and we could not gather a congregation, though our societies were scattered, and we were exposed to all the indignities which the anti-slavery advocates have to suffer now in the South, we stood our ground, and by and by we saw the result of all these things. We were much discouraged when these events took place. When we saw these violent men rampant and triumphant, when we saw our churches in ruins, and our congregations scattered hither and thither, and our mouths closed for nearly two years together, we were greatly discouraged, and we wondered what Divine Providence was working out through all these things. By and by we began to see what it was. By these means it was that that storm of indignation was raised among the British people, that led to the abolition of slavery. They saw

there was no chance even of evangelizing the negroes while slavery existed, and they rose in their might, and the British Government was obliged to yield; and slavery, with all its abominations, its chains and whips, its tortures and dungeons, was swept away, to be known no more in those colonies for ever. (Applause.)

Sir, I was there when slavery was abolished. I saw the monster die. This day, twenty-four years ago, I stood up late at night, in one of the churches under my charge,—a very large church,—and the aisles were crowded, and the gallery stairs, and the communion place, and the pulpit stairs, were all crowded, and there were thousands of people round the building, at every open door and window, looking in. This was at ten o'clock at night, on the 31st of July. We thought that it was right and proper that our Christian people should receive their freedom as a boon from God, and in the house of prayer, and we gathered them together in the church for a midnight service. It was my privilege to stand up in that congregation, and 'proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound.' (Applause.) Sir, our mouths had been closed about slavery up to that time. We could not quote, without endangering our lives, a passage that had reference even to spiritual emancipation. These planters found treason in the Bible and sedition in the spiritual hymns of Watts and Wesley, and we were obliged to be careful how we used them, and in what connection we used the word liberty; because they had a law,—the law of 'constructive treason,' it was called,—that doomed any

man to death who made use of language tending to excite a desire for liberty among the slaves. You may imagine, then, with what feelings I saw myself emancipated from this thralldom, and free to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of prison-doors to them that were bound.' (Applause.) I took for my text that night Leviticus 25:10. By and by, the midnight hour approached. When it was within two or three minutes of the first of August,—the day appointed for the liberation of the slaves,—I requested all the people to kneel down, as befitting the solemnity of the hour, and engage in silent prayer to God. They did so; and, sir, I looked down upon them—the silence only broken by the sobs of emotion which it was impossible to repress. By and by the clock began to strike;—it was the knell of Slavery! It was the stroke which proclaimed liberty to eight hundred thousand human beings! And, sir, what a burst of joy rolled over that mass of people when the clock struck, and they felt they were slaves no longer! They remained on their knees a moment, and then I told them to rise. They did so; and, sir, it was really affecting to see, in one corner, a mother, with her little one, whom she had brought with her, because there was no one at home to take care of it, clasp her baby to her bosom; and there was an old white headed man, embracing a daughter; and here, again, would be a husband congratulating his wife in a similar way; and something like confusion was apparent all over the building. However, we made allowance for these seeming improprieties, because of the occasion, and by and by all was still again, and then, sir, I gave out a hymn. I am glad to say I have it here.

I cannot tell you, so well as you may imagine, the feelings with which these people, just emerging into freedom, shouted,—for they literally *shouted*,—the hymn which I now read to you:—

‘Send the glad tidings o’er the sea,—
His chains are broke, the slave is free;
Britannia’s justice, wealth, and might
Have gained the negro’s long-lost right!
His chains are broke, the slave is free,—
This is the Negro’s jubilee!

‘Hail! blessed and auspicious day!
Dear is thy first bright dawning ray,
Which comes, an angel from above,
Herald of freedom, joy and love:
Thy breezes whisper, ‘Slave, be free!’—
Now is the Negro’s jubilee!

‘O Thou, whose favor long was sought,
What full deliverance hast thou wrought!
The captive’s groan has pierced thine ear,
And thou hast wiped the falling tear.
The curse is past, the slave is free!
This is the Negro’s jubilee!

‘Our prayers shall now with praise combine,
For freedom poured on every clime;
For holy freedom, gracious Lord,
To join a world in sweet accord:
Then, freed from sin, from error free,
We’ll keep a brighter jubilee!’

I hope the time will soon come, Mr. Chairman, when thousands of Christian ministers, with their congregations, throughout the length and breadth of the United States, will be able to sing that Jubilee Hymn! (Loud applause.)

But, sir, I find that I am trespassing upon the time and patience of the audience, [Cries of ‘No, no,’ and

‘Go on,'] and therefore I will hasten to another subject, which I have found, since I have been in New England, is regarded by many persons as of great importance, namely, The Working of Emancipation in the British Colonies.

Sir, I have been told, since I have been here, that emancipation, it is understood, has been a failure. I am prepared to give this statement an unqualified contradiction. There is no sense whatever in which the emancipation of the slaves of the British colonies has proved a failure. Sir, emancipation has not proved a failure in this sense,—the people are all free. It has not failed to break their chains and set them free. In that it is no failure, but a blessed reality. Then, sir, I am told that the people are worse off in freedom than they were in slavery, and in that sense emancipation has proved a failure. But, sir, it is not true; and I wonder, I have often wondered, how any man with common sense could for a moment entertain such an opinion. Sir, the people now, throughout the British colonies, have their own time at their disposal—their whole time. This was not the case in the days of slavery. The only time they had at their disposal then was one day in two weeks, to cultivate their provision grounds and procure the necessaries of life, and the Sabbath to go to market, and for religious worship, if they chose. That was all the time the people in Jamaica had at their own disposal under slavery. Their masters did not give them food or wages, but they gave them a piece of land,—it might be two or three acres, if they could cultivate them,—sometimes four or five, even ten or fifteen miles away from the estate on which they resided;

and they gave them one day in two weeks to raise provisions upon this piece of land,—and that was all, except a little salt fish now and then, with which to season their provisions. Now, sir, the people have all their time; they can spend it to the best advantage, according to their own judgment, and according to their views of their own interest. Then, sir, the people now have the Sabbath. Formerly, it was impossible for them to keep holy the Sabbath day; they had to go to market on that day; and when their market was over, they would bring their baskets and trays to the place of worship, and deposit them there,—having taken some opportunity to change their apparel,—while they went into the sanctuary to worship God. That was all the Sabbath the negro had. The Sabbath market prevailed over the whole of the West Indies, and there was more business done on that day than on all the other days of the week. All this was brought to an end by emancipation. The negro can now spend the whole day with his family in the house of prayer and in the worship of God, according to the dictates of his conscience.

Then, sir, the negro is free from the liability to the lash. It is true, that for some years before emancipation, the law limited the master's power of punishment to the infliction of thirty-nine lashes at one time; but the master had only to take care that none but slaves were witnesses, and he might inflict three hundred and ninety lashes instead of thirty-nine, without the slightest apprehension of punishment, because the testimony of a slave could not be received against his master, whatever he might do. Now, sir, the power of punishment was taken from the hands of the mas-

ter, at the time of emancipation, and placed in the hands of the magistrate, responsible to the public and to the government for the manner in which he uses his authority.

Then, sir, families are no longer liable to be scattered; the child cannot be sold away from the parent, nor the wife from the husband, as used to be the case in the days of slavery. Although, for some years, this was prevented by the ameliorating measures introduced by the British government, before emancipation, yet in the times of ancient slavery, the wife and child were sold and separated from each other, and from the husband and father, without the slightest feeling or compunction, just as now in the Southern States of this Union. All this has passed away.

Then, sir, the negroes have their own houses. Nearly all the black people in Jamaica are freeholders. They have their own pieces of land, and their own cottages erected upon the land, and there they dwell, under their own vine and fig tree, no man daring to molest or make them afraid.

Then they have the disposal of their children. They can send them to school, or take them to work in the field, at their pleasure.

All these beneficial changes have been wrought by emancipation; and yet we are told that emancipation has failed to improve the condition of the colored race. Sir, it is one of the many falsehoods got up by the pro-slavery party to blind the eyes of the friends of humanity in this country, and promote the interests of slavery. It is a falsehood, and I denounce it as such. Throughout the British West Indies, in every island, the condition of the people is incomparably superior, in all respects, to what it was in slavery.

Then, I am told, if it has not ruined the laborer, it has ruined the planter. Sir, I deny that as plainly as I deny the other. I might maintain, with great propriety, that if many West India proprietors were ruined by emancipation, they only got what they deserved. (Laughter.) I do not, however, take that position, but I say this: that it was not emancipation, but slavery, that ruined those who were ruined. They were ruined long before emancipation took place. I would recommend our friends who can do so to read Montgomery Martin's History of the British Colonies, published in 1851,—a new edition of a former work. There it is shown, to a demonstration, that long before Buxton and Wilberforce lifted their voices in the British Senate to advocate the emancipation of the negroes, the colonists throughout the West Indies continually complained that they were ruined. And no wonder that they were ruined. There was a condition of things existing under slavery, that must inevitably ruin any landholder under the sun. Just look, sir, at the condition of a West India estate under slavery. There were four or five hundred slaves. It is true, the master did not go to much expense in providing them with luxuries, or even with food, but he had to bestow upon them so many yards of cloth a year, and several other small articles: that was one item of expense. Then, to superintend the labor of these slaves, there must be four book-keepers, as they were called, one to superintend the still, another the boiling-house, another took care of the cattle on the estate, and another, if not two or three, superintended the people in the field. All these had to be fed and salaried. Then there was

the overseer of the estate, with his harem, and he, too, living at considerable expense out of the estate, and at a high salary. Then, over all was the attorney, in the absence of the proprietor, who managed the affairs of the estate, disposed of the produce, and provided the cattle and other materials for working the estate. Well, he took his commission out of every thing the estate produced, and occupied, at his pleasure, what was called 'the great house,' and having his harem there. Then, sir, there was the proprietor, with his family, living in France or England, in princely style,—and all this to be drawn out of the produce of one estate. I should like to know whether there is an estate throughout the length and breadth of this country, that could sustain such a drain as this,—whether there is any property that would not be brought to ruin, with so many living upon it and out of it.

It was that process that brought ruin upon many of the West India proprietors. And, sir, emancipation proved a boon to them. The compensation money enabled them to lessen the mortgages on their estates. By this expensive method of working the estates, and this expensive style of living, the merchants, who had also their commissions to take out of the estates, became mortgagees, by making large advances on the property; so that, when emancipation came, there was not one estate in fifty that was not mortgaged to the full extent of its value. Emancipation came, and instead of being a curse, it proved a blessing to the proprietors. Suppose they had four hundred slaves; they would receive, on the average, not less than twenty pounds for each,—about £8000, or \$40,000 for

the whole. It is true, the mortgagee took this compensation money ; but then, the estate was relieved to that extent, and many of the proprietors were going on with a fair prospect of working themselves clear of their difficulties. Then came another sweeping change. You remember the free trade policy adopted by the British government during the ministry of Sir Robert Peel. Among those measures was one equalizing the sugar duty, and throwing the freed colonies of Britain into an unequal competition, or a competition for which they were not prepared, with Cuba and Brazil, where the produce was raised by slave labor. I do not find fault with that free trade policy ; indeed, I do not express any opinion upon it at all, for I am not much of a politician ; but this change came upon the colonies prematurely, before they were prepared for it, and the consequent reduction of the price of sugar to an extent which rendered it unremunerative, forced some of the planters to an abandonment of their estates, which passed into the hands of the merchants. In Antigua, some of the best estates on the island are held by the merchants, who obtained them in that way. The English house of Shand have several, which came into their hands by the foreclosing of mortgages. It was in this way, not by emancipation, but by slavery and its concomitants, that the planters were ruined.

Now look at the West Indies as they are. In the island of Jamaica, we are told, there is a satisfactory state of things. I cannot speak of that island from personal knowledge, because I have not been there within the last ten years. But I can say, that before I left, no less than fifty thousand colored people had become freeholders, as the fruit of their own industry.

Yet we are told these people will not work. How did they obtain these freeholds, then? Some of their houses are richly furnished, with mahogany bedsteads and sideboards. How did they get these, expect as the result of their own toil?

I was in Jamaica when the railroad was built, extending some fourteen or fifteen miles from the city of Kingston. I was acquainted with the manager of the works. There were considerable engineering difficulties to be overcome. The road was built entirely by colored people, and the manager of the works told me that he could not desire people to work better than they did; that he could obtain workmen to any extent, and why? Because, he says, on Saturday evening, when they have finished their work for the week, they have their wages. It was not so upon the estates, sir; and that is the reason why hundreds and thousands of the colored people of Jamaica have retired from work on the sugar plantations. I know that many hundreds of them were defrauded of their wages. One of those great planting attorneys, who had some fifty or sixty large estates under his care, made it his boast, in the presence of a friend of mine, after the act of emancipation came into force, that he made those estates pay well, because he cheated the people out of half their wages, by one method or another. That was the difficulty. After the people were emancipated, before they obtained land and houses of their own, they occupied the land and houses owned by the proprietors, which they had occupied when they were slaves, and the overseers made them pay their rent three or four times over. You must pay, they would say, so much in labor for

the rent of your house ; then the wife was required to pay an equal amount, and if there were two or three adult members of the family, each one was required to pay the rent of the cottage in labor ; and thus they managed to get out of the people rent four times over in many cases, and in numberless instances, three times and twice. I happened to occupy a position which brought me much into contact with the laborers, and therefore I knew of the operation of this evil. The colored members of our churches contributed towards the maintenance of the churches, and towards the maintenance of the ministers ; and very frequently the missionaries were told, when they could not give their usual contributions, that they could not obtain their wages ; and upon one occasion, a poor man, whom I knew well, whom I had taught to read and write, who had promised five dollars for the erection of a school-house and church in the neighborhood in which he lived, came to me and told me he was very sorry he could not pay the money, because his employer had wronged him out of all he had earned for several months,—and that employer was a man who had a salary of one thousand pounds in connection with an office which he held under government. The poor man had labored until his wages amounted to sixteen doubloons—over two hundred and fifty dollars, and then his employer took the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors' Act, and never paid him or his fellow-laborers—there were two or three hundred of them—one cent of what they had earned by the labor of several months ! Is it surprising, then, that the colored people should choose to cultivate their own two, three or five acres of land, and get what they

could off that, and refuse to go to work upon a plantation when they were expected to do the work of free-men on the terms of slavery?

These, sir, are the evils which have wrought out those results which have seemed, for a time, to justify the statement, that the people would not work in Jamaica. They are passing away. A recent number of the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, published at New York, which was put into my hands a day or two ago, contains a long report from one of the leading anti-slavery men in this country,—Mr. Charles Tappan,—of a visit which he has been making to the West Indies Colonies within the last few months; and he says, in reference to Jamaica:—

‘The alleged want of labor is a false cry. To cultivate the whole area of land at present lying waste in all the colonies—except Barbadoes—would, indeed, absorb any number of laborers; but the evidence is overwhelming that no addition to their number is necessary to meet the demand for the estates that are actually under cultivation. Where labor is said to be deficient, it can be traced to causes within the planters’ control to remove. Of these, insufficient wages, unpunctual payment of the same, or no payment at all, are stated to be the chief. Immigration on the present system is condemned as expensive and unsatisfactory, injurious to the people who are introduced, and to the native colonial population.

The allegations of idleness and immorality, which have been propagated by *The Times*, are indignantly repudiated as gross calumnies, and the writers are challenged to produce the proof of their reckless statements. The Committee feel satisfied that all unbiased persons who read the annexed communications must come to the conclusion that the negro population of the West India colonies have been shamefully maligned, and that the demand for “immigrant labor” pro-

ceeds from a desire to graft upon free-labor a system of forced service, which is totally incompatible with the spirit of the Act of Emancipation.'

So much for Jamaica. I cannot say much about its present condition; for I have not been there for ten years. But, sir, I have been in Barbadoes, and there I am laboring at present, as a minister amongst the colored churches, and I can tell you the state of that island. Sir, that island even in the most palmy days of slavery, was never in such a state of prosperity as it is now. This very year, although it has been an unfavorable year, the long drought lessening the crop of sugar, yet they have raised, with no greater amount of labor than in the time of slavery, more than double the amount of produce they ever raised under slavery. That is the result of this year's labor.

Now, let us look at the value of property in that island. If emancipation has ruined the proprietors or the work-people, if emancipation has proved a failure, how is it, sir, that on the island of Barbadoes, you cannot get an acre of land for less than four or five hundred dollars in any part of the island? That is the truth, sir. I knew of an estate in my own neighborhood, of not more than two or three hundred acres, which was transferred to other hands for £18,000—equal to nearly \$90,000 of your money—and that paid in cash. Where is there a farm of the same extent in the United States, that will bring a price equal to that? I wanted to buy a piece of land, within the last twelve months, to build a school-house upon. It was nine or ten miles away from the town, and consequently not a building lot, and there was no circumstance associated with it to render it of

extraordinary value. I was offered a piece,—the eighth of an acre,—for how much, do you think? *Four hundred dollars!* That was at the rate of \$3,200 per acre for land in the country.

I occupy a mission station about nine miles out of Bridgeton. I have two acres of land, upon which stand the place of worship, the school-house, my place of residence, and the teachers' residence. I wanted to enlarge our boundaries, and there were two acres of land, belonging to a small estate in the neighborhood, and separated from it by a road passing through. It joins my residence, and would be very convenient in all respects, except that half of it is very rocky; but the owner would not let me have it for less than one thousand dollars, and I could not make the purchase, because the price was so high. I have known an estate of three or four hundred acres sold, within the last eight months, for £40,000. It is situated very near the city, and that is the reason why the price was so much higher than the other one to which I have referred. These facts speak volumes in regard to the 'ruin' of the British planters by emancipation. (Applause.)

I will tell you what sort of 'ruin' has been brought upon those islands. You will please to understand that I did not furnish myself with facts before I came away; they come to me incidentally. I had no idea that I should have a word to say upon the anti-slavery question, or I would have come better prepared with statistics. I am building some schools for the children of our colored congregations; and I have been round begging money of the proprietors. Among the rest, I waited upon a Mr. Carrington, who owns

two estates within sight of my sitting-room, and he gave me forty dollars towards my object; and while there, I learned these facts: that last year, he made on the two estates together, comprising between six and seven hundred acres, three hundred and three hogsheads of sugar. This year, he resolved to make an effort to extend his cultivation, and enlarge the produce. He did so. He employed laborers to cover all the rocks with soil, digging mud out of the ditches and out of the pond, and covering up every yard of naked rock, and planting canes upon it. He built, instead of the old wind mills, which had been in use from time immemorial, two steam engines, and put up on one estate a double row of coppers for the manufacture of the sugar. What is the result? He has raised seven hundred and fifty hogsheads from those two estates. Now, apart from the capital he expended in improvements, and in building, the molasses, the draining from the sugar, would go a long way towards paying the working expenses of these estates; and he would carry into the English market seven hundred and fifty hogsheads of sugar, and would sell them, I dare say, at not less than twenty pounds per hogshead, and would thus realize, from those two estates, more than sixty thousand dollars for the present year. That, sir, is the kind of ruin that emancipation has brought upon the West India islands.

So in Antigua. I lived three years in Antigua, before I went to Barbadoes, and a friend of mine there, a member of my own church, bought an estate, that was sold under a decree of Chancery, for £5000. He has taken off three valuable crops, which have

more than repaid the original purchase money ; and he has been offered £10,000 for the property, and refused it. That is the kind of 'ruin' that has come upon the West India islands because of emancipation !

Then, sir, look at the moral condition of these islands. The moral condition of Barbadoes will compare favorably with that of any other civilized country. I believe the criminal statistics of Barbadoes, for the last five or six years, would compare with any country under heaven, without disadvantage. We seldom hear of any thing like serious crimes. Then, sir, the vice of intemperance is not prevalent among the people. I have a membership of seventeen hundred colored persons, and during the last two years I have been there, I have not had one single case of intemperance reported to me, in connection with our disciplinary proceedings.

Then look at our churches. Every Sabbath, they are inconveniently crowded by people anxious to receive instruction. I know of no people in the world who will make such efforts and exercise such self-denial to obtain education for their children as the people in Barbadoes. I will mention one little incident that occurred only a day or two before I left to come to this country. One of my own church members, a colored man, had just finished manufacturing his little portion of sugar, grown on a part of the half acre of land on which stood his house, and on which he raised the provisions for his family, and he brought me six dollars, and requested that I would receive the money in advance as school fees for his four children for the next twelve months. That, sir, is the only

instance I ever heard of in my life of a man, in his condition, prepaying the education of his children for twelve months. He was resolved, whatever else suffered, his children should not suffer the loss of education; he has secured it for them for the next twelve months.

The people are willing to do all they can to raise themselves, and they do raise themselves. I have heard since I have been here, that colored people in this country do not make efforts to raise themselves out of their degraded position. [A voice—‘That is not true.’] If it be true, I do not wonder at it. I do not see how any people can lift themselves up against the weight of prejudice and discouragement that seems to be cast upon them in this country. When I came into Boston, two or three weeks ago, I went into a hotel, and the very first thing that arrested my attention was this: A play-bill hung in the office of the hotel, on which I read—‘*Colored people admitted only to the gallery.*’ That alone was sufficient to satisfy me that they are laboring under discouragements, difficulties and prejudices which must exercise a blighting influence upon them, and must necessarily keep them down. The colored people of the British colonies have outlived all this, to a great extent. Lord Mulgrave, when he came out as Governor, in 1832, took noble ground in this respect. The law which had placed the colored people of the colony on an equality with the whites had just come into operation. Formerly, in all those islands, as now in the South, a colored man could not sit in the jury box,—[A voice—‘He cannot in the Northern States’]—nor on a coroner’s jury; he was not allow-

ed to exercise the elective franchise; he could not hold any office under government, either civil or military, and up to within a short time, he could not inherit property, except within a very limited amount. Well, sir, a law was passed, and went into force, which did away with all their legal disabilities; still, they were subject to the same discouraging prejudices that I find existing here, to a great extent. A white man would have felt himself degraded by sitting down to table with a colored man. Lord Mulgrave determined to put his foot upon this evil, and he invited some of the most intelligent and respectable colored ladies and gentlemen,—those whose wealth, intelligence and position in society entitled them to such a mark of distinction,—to his parties. (Applause.) He made it a point to dance with colored ladies himself, and he introduced colored gentlemen to Lady Mulgrave as partners, with whom she danced; and when some of the gentry gave the cold shoulder to these colored guests, he caused it to be intimated to them, that if they expected invitations to the Government House, his guests must be treated by them with the same respect and courtesy he manifested towards them himself. (Loud cheers.) That, sir, did more than any thing else I know of to put an end to the reign of prejudice upon that island. Very soon, the colored people began to mingle upon equal terms with the whites; they met together in private parties; and soon the colored people, by the exercise of the elective franchise, acquired a considerable degree of political power; and now it would be the ruin of any public man in Jamaica to have it known or suspected that he cherishes any prejudice whatsoever against his fellow-men on account of color.

Sir, the colored people, removed from under the discouraging influences to which I have referred, show themselves able to cope with the white man under any circumstances. Take, for instance, the present head of the Jamaica government—Edward Jordan, a colored man; his dark skin and his frizzly hair show him to be nearly allied to the African race on one side, as he is to the white race on the other. I remember the time when Edward Jordan,—who had acquired all the learning he had from our mission schools,—stood within the shadow of the gallows, and had a very narrow escape for his life,—and for what? It was in the days of slavery, and he was a leader in the anti-slavery party. He had taken an active part in the agitation which ended in the removal of the legal disabilities of the free colored people, and then he stood up to agitate for the abolition of slavery, having started a semi-weekly newspaper called the *Jamaica Watchman*; and in the beginning of 1832, there was a pro-slavery man, who had been a leader in that party, who suddenly came over to the anti-slavery party, and took active measures to ameliorate the condition of the colored people, and prepare the way for the abolition of slavery. Well, sir, in the newspaper controversy to which this gave rise, Mr. Jordan wrote the following sentence:—‘We are glad to see Mr. Beaumont coming over to the right side, and we shall be glad with him and all the friends of humanity, to give a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, and bring down the system by the run, knock off the fetters, and let the oppressed go free.’ That was the sentence. The following week, as he sat in the Supreme Court, reporting for his paper, to his utter as-

tonishment, he heard his own name proclaimed by the clerk, under indictment for a capital felony—‘constructive treason.’ He had never heard a whisper of it before, but he was taken from his seat, placed in the felon’s dock, and arraigned upon that capital charge; and it was with the utmost difficulty that his counsel, Mr. Watkis, also a colored man, succeeded in getting his trial postponed for two days, to prepare his defence. The prosecution failed, because they could not prove the publication of the paper; but there was a regular plot against the life of Mr. Jordan, to which the Governor, Lord Belmore, (to his shame be it said,) was a party, he having agreed, if Mr. Jordan was convicted, to sign the warrant for his execution. He was removed shortly after for incompetency, and then came in the noble Lord Mulgrave, now Marquis of Normandy, to whom I have referred.

But this effort to destroy Mr. Jordan only placed him upon an eminence. The colored people rallied around him. They had the control of the elections in Kingston; and at the next ballot, they elected him as the representative of the commercial capital of Jamaica, which position he occupied for twenty years. About the time I left the West Indies, he was called into the upper branch of the legislature, the Council, and now Mr. Jordan is Prime Minister of Jamaica, the head of the Cabinet. He occupies the same position in Jamaica, as the Earl of Derby in England, and is a man who commands the respect of all parties and all colors in the community.

Then, sir, there is Mr. Richard Hill. He has been for twenty years the head of the stipendiary magistrates’ department in that island, and a man of well-

known ability and information; indeed, he is looked up to by all parties on the island as authority in all matters of natural science. Mr. Hill is also colored, only one remove from a black man; that is, he is the child of a black mother, having a colored father. Mr. Hill is a man whom any one might be proud to call his friend; a man of masterly intellect, a perfect gentleman, and every thing that a man ought to be, and I may add, he is a Christian man.

Then there is upon the judicial bench of Jamaica Mr. Montrief,—also only one remove from a black man. His father, who was a man of some wealth, sent him to England, and gave him a liberal education; he was admitted to practice in one of the Inns of Court, made his way to the Jamaica bar, and then to the bench, and is now the second amongst the judges of the colony.

Sir, place the colored man along side, on equal terms, and he will compete with the white. How has Mr. Jordan forced his way? Not by favor, sir, but by talent, and the exercise of that talent. How have Mr. Hill and Mr. Montrief won the positions they now fill? Not by favor, sir, but by competing with the white man, with all the advantages of education and wealth and interest in his favor. Sir, my observation goes to show this: that they make good mechanics, very good magistrates, (for more than half the magistrates in the island of Jamaica are colored men,) efficient legislators, (I suppose not less than a dozen in the Legislature of Jamaica are men of African descent,—two of them ‘perfect Africans,’ to use an expression common here; one of them has occupied the

position he fills twelve or fourteen years, the other, ten years,—and occupied them respectably and efficiently.) They make, also, good medical practitioners. One of the cleverest men I knew in the island of Jamaica, and a man who stood first in one branch of practice, was a colored man. They make very excellent schoolmasters. All my teachers are colored men, and I would not exchange them for white men. If I had the choice of a white or colored man as a teacher in the West Indies, I should decidedly give the preference to the colored man, on this account: he can better accommodate himself to his position. In nearly all cases where men come out from Europe to take the position of schoolmasters, they turn out to be failures. We can only conduct our schools efficiently by having and training colored teachers; and we do that, and we find the colored man, in every walk of life, able to compete, and that successfully, with men of fairer skin.

Then what about the ladies? I can say a good word for them. They make capable housekeepers, devoted, faithful wives, tender and judicious mothers. Sir, it is not an uncommon thing for white men to marry colored ladies. I have known numerous instances of this kind, and I have seen these colored ladies presiding at the table of their husbands with as much grace and dignity as any white lady could display in that position. Sir, give them the opportunity, and they will show themselves to advantage, whether male or female. (Applause.)

I do not know, sir, that I should feel justified in dwelling any longer upon this theme; I fear I hav

wearied this audience. However, you asked me to enter, in detail, upon this question of the failure of emancipation; and I think, although I have done it very lamely, I have stated facts which go to prove beyond dispute, that emancipation in the British colonies is no failure. (Applause.)







